

# Colonial Latin American Historical Review

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Volume 9  
Issue 3 *Volume 9, Issue 3 (Summer 2000)*

Article 1

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6-1-2000

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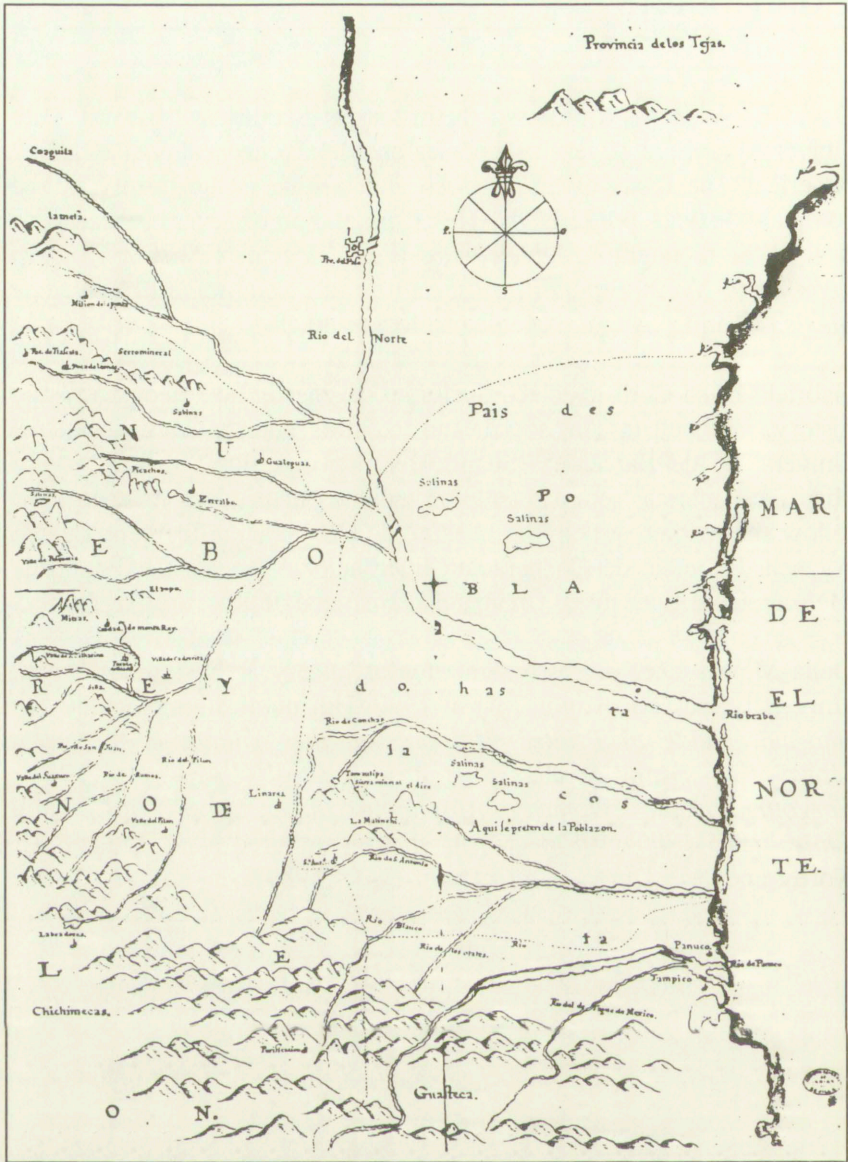
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### Recommended Citation

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Inaccurate composite eighteenth-century map featuring Texas and Coahuila. Boca de Leones is shown in upper left-hand corner. Mapas y Planos, México 524, Archivo General de Indias, Sevilla.



# At the Lion's Mouth: San Miguel de Aguayo in the Defense of Nuevo León, 1686-1841

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DAVID B. ADAMS

On 25 January 1775, Governor Melchor Vidal de Lorca of Nuevo León reported to Viceroy Antonio María de Bucareli that the fragile peace along the province's northwestern frontier had been ruptured by a sudden and brutal Indian attack upon the Rancho de San Ambrosio.<sup>1</sup> This settlement, Nuevo León's only outpost beyond the Salado River, had been devastated by the attack of 11 January. The raiders had killed at least twenty-eight persons, including eighteen adult males. San Ambrosio had received ample warning that a war party was in the vicinity, but, according to the governor, the residents chose to ignore it. When the attack came, only six men were armed and prepared to withstand it. As these men were killed one by one, other defenders panicked and retreated. The rest, including the women and children, sought shelter in San Ambrosio's flimsy dwellings or other buildings. Consequently, the raiders set fire to these structures to flush out their victims who, "fleeing death in the midst of the flames...encountered it at the points of the Indians' lances."<sup>2</sup> After being alerted by one or more of the escapees, a party of presidial soldiers and civilians then rode to the relief of San Ambrosio. Finding no one alive, the soldiers unsuccessfully pursued the attackers. The rescuers finally returned to the ruined settlement to bury its dead. Later still, the bones of these victims were disinterred and re-buried in the parish cemetery at Punta de Lampazos, a mission-presidio

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<sup>1</sup> Vidal de Lorca to Bucareli, Monterrey, 25 January 1775, Archivo General de la Nación, Mexico (hereinafter cited as AGN), Provincias Internas, vol. 143, exp. 16, fols. 255-58v.

<sup>2</sup> The original wording is: "uiendo la muerte entre las llamas daban con ella entre los Chuzos de los Yndios." Vidal de Lorca to Bucareli, Monterrey, 25 January 1775, AGN, Provincias Internas, vol. 143, exp. 16, fol. 256. Unless otherwise indicated, all translations are by the author.



complex south of the Salado.<sup>3</sup> The attack pointed out the weaknesses in official policy responses to the defense of the area.

Governor Vidal de Lorca concluded his report to Viceroy Bucareli by summarizing the difficulties of defending the northern and western approaches of Nuevo León. The entire western edge of the province was exposed to incursions by the indigenous peoples who used the mountains that bordered Nuevo León and Coahuila as the staging area for their assaults and as a refuge from their pursuers. The lower, more open terrain along the Salado was a particular problem, for it was principally there that indigenous raiders entered Nuevo León. The governor urged, as he had done on at least three previous occasions, that Bucareli establish a garrison of regular troops at Lampazos to patrol the Salado valley, which would block the most vulnerable point of entry into his jurisdiction. In the meantime, Vidal de Lorca continued, he was relying upon a force of forty-two men, drawn from militia formations in the western part of the province, to patrol the Salado and its fords. Evidently this was the force that attempted to relieve San Ambrosio. Also, he had recently re-established observation posts at the mountain passes between Lampazos and the Valle de Santa Catarina, just west of Monterrey, which were manned by militia detachments.<sup>4</sup>

In his reply, Bucareli deplored the tragic events at San Ambrosio but, cost-conscious bureaucrat that he was, rejected Vidal de Lorca's plea for a permanent garrison at Lampazos. King Charles III, he pointed out, could not maintain such units everywhere. Besides, the primary responsibility for defending Nuevo León lay with its own inhabitants, who certainly owed His Majesty no less in recognition of

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<sup>3</sup> Burial records for Lampazos, Nuevo León, Archivo Parroquial de Lampazos, Nuevo León (hereinafter cited as APL), Entierros, vol. 1, 1729-1797 (*sic*, 1700-1803) [Reel 706]. Material in this and other civil or parish archives of Nuevo León's municipalities has been microfilmed by the Fondo de Documentación para la Historia del Noreste de México, a subdivision of the Biblioteca del Instituto Tecnológico y de Estudios Superiores de Monterrey. Copies of this microfilm are on file in the library of Trinity University, San Antonio, Texas. Relevant citations include the file numbers of the microfilm reels consulted.

<sup>4</sup> Vidal de Lorca to Bucareli, Monterrey, 25 January 1775, AGN, Provincias Internas, vol. 143, exp. 16, fol. 258; Vidal de Lorca to Bucareli, Monterrey, 3 April 1774, AGN, Provincias Internas, vol. 143, exp. 16, fol. 248; and Vidal de Lorca to Bucareli, Monterrey, 24 June 1774, AGN, Provincias Internas, vol. 143, exp. 16, fols. 253v-54.



the benefits conferred upon them by the Crown. The viceroy sarcastically noted that the reported strength of the band whose warriors had devastated San Ambrosio was about eighty, including women and children, "which does rather diminish their significance."<sup>5</sup> In sum, Bucareli felt that if San Ambrosio had adequately attended to its own defense, it would not have suffered that fatal blow on 11 January.

The exchange between Bucareli and Vidal de Lorca exemplified a problem with which Spanish policy-makers struggled throughout most of the Bourbon era, in New Spain and elsewhere: should vulnerable frontier regions depend upon militiamen and other part-time soldiers for their security, or should their protection be entrusted to full-time units of volunteers or conscripts led by professionals, especially in strategically sensitive localities?

In northern New Spain, both kinds of defensive arrangements had co-existed since the Chichimeca wars of the sixteenth century. In the eighteenth century, along most of the northern frontier, the civilian militia reinforced, at least in theory, the presidios and their garrisons of cavalymen. However, in 1775, Nuevo León was the exception. In spite of its exposed northern and western flanks, it lay below the military frontier of New Spain. Other northeastern provinces such as Coahuila, Texas, and Nuevo Santander, had presidial companies or similar formations available to absorb the initial impact of raids and attacks, particularly by the Apaches. Nuevo León's professional troops consisted of only eight soldiers, which were distributed among various mission communities.<sup>6</sup> The principal burden of its defense still rested upon part-time soldiers, notably those whose homes lay near the Salado River or along the province's western margins.

The latter included a thirty-five-mile long lowland, the Valle de Santiago, which extended southward from the Punta de Lampazos at its broad upper extremity to the Boca de Leones—the mouth, or Pass of the Lions—at its lower end (see Map 1). Parallel ranges of rugged mountains defined the valley's eastern and western limits. Both ranges, especially the western one adjacent to the Coahuilan border, were

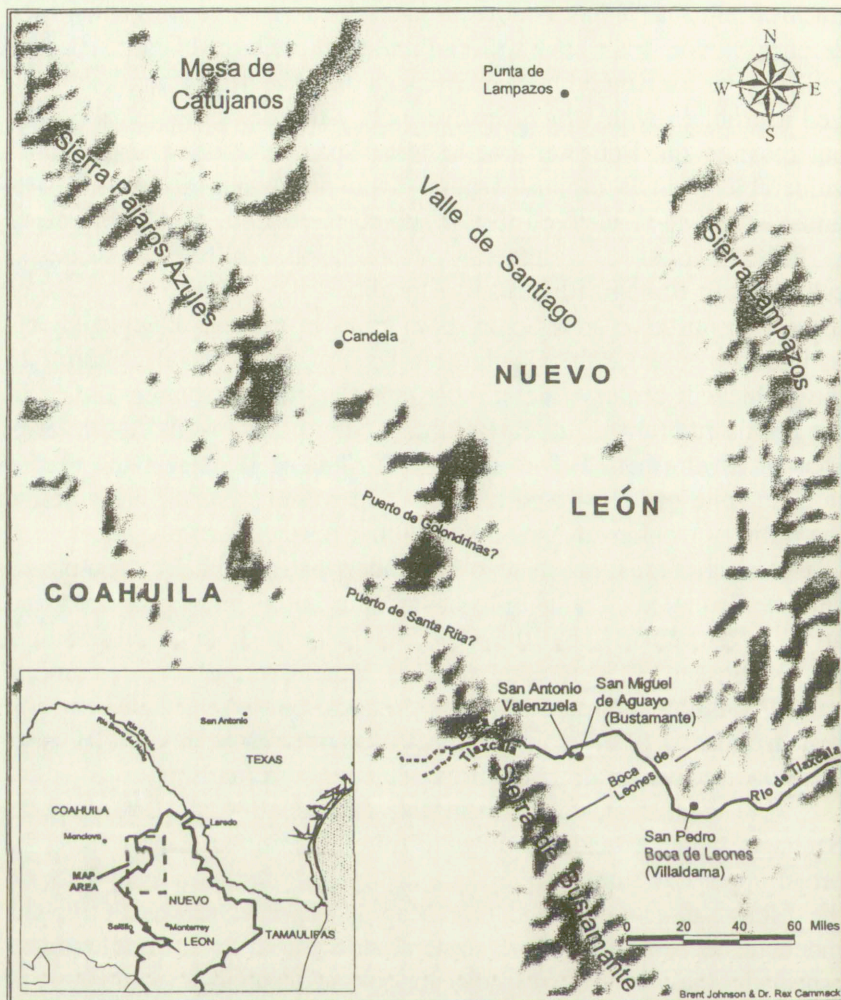
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<sup>5</sup> The original wording is: "que les disminuyen en mucha parte." Bucareli to Vidal de Lorca, Mexico City, 15 February 1775, AGN, Provincias Internas, vol. 143, exp. 16, fol. 257v.

<sup>6</sup> Peter Gerhard, *The North Frontier of New Spain* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982), 350.



Mapa 1



Boca de Leones and the region of Nuevo León and Coahuila. Map created by Dr. Rex Cammack and Mr. Brent Johnson.



pierced by passes, and both furnished ample accommodation for Nuevo León's indigenous enemies, which included alienated local peoples as well as Apaches and other relative newcomers from the High Plains of Texas and beyond.<sup>7</sup> The western approaches included an imposing plateau—the Mesa de Catujanos—across the valley from Lampazos, which had provided refuge for generations of indigenous peoples escaping the mistreatment by ranchers and mine owners, or the restrictions of life in the Franciscan missions of Coahuila and Nuevo León.<sup>8</sup> Raiders who traversed the valley from the north or west unopposed found easy access to the mining towns of Sabinas and Vallecillo, to the east, or southward through the Boca de Leones to the vicinity of Monterrey (see Map 2).

Therefore the Valle de Santiago was of critical importance to the security of Nuevo León as a whole. Consequently, Vidal de Lorca undertook an official inspection tour in early February 1775, in part to ascertain the actual state of its defenses and those of northern and western Nuevo León at large.<sup>9</sup> On 22 February, the governor arrived at the pueblo of San Miguel de Aguayo, a settlement located in a pleasant, fertile mountain cove at the extreme southwestern corner of the Valle de Santiago. Just to the west was an imposing pass, the Boca de Tlaxcala, through which flowed the river of the same name. The Río de Tlaxcala served as the principal source of irrigation for San Miguel de Aguayo and its near neighbor, the *criollo* mining town of San Pedro Boca de Leones, six miles to the southeast.

San Miguel's founders were a group of families from San Esteban de la Nueva Tlaxcala, a community situated on the Mesa Central next to Saltillo. When San Miguel was founded in 1686, its settlers brought with them the same generous grants of privilege and

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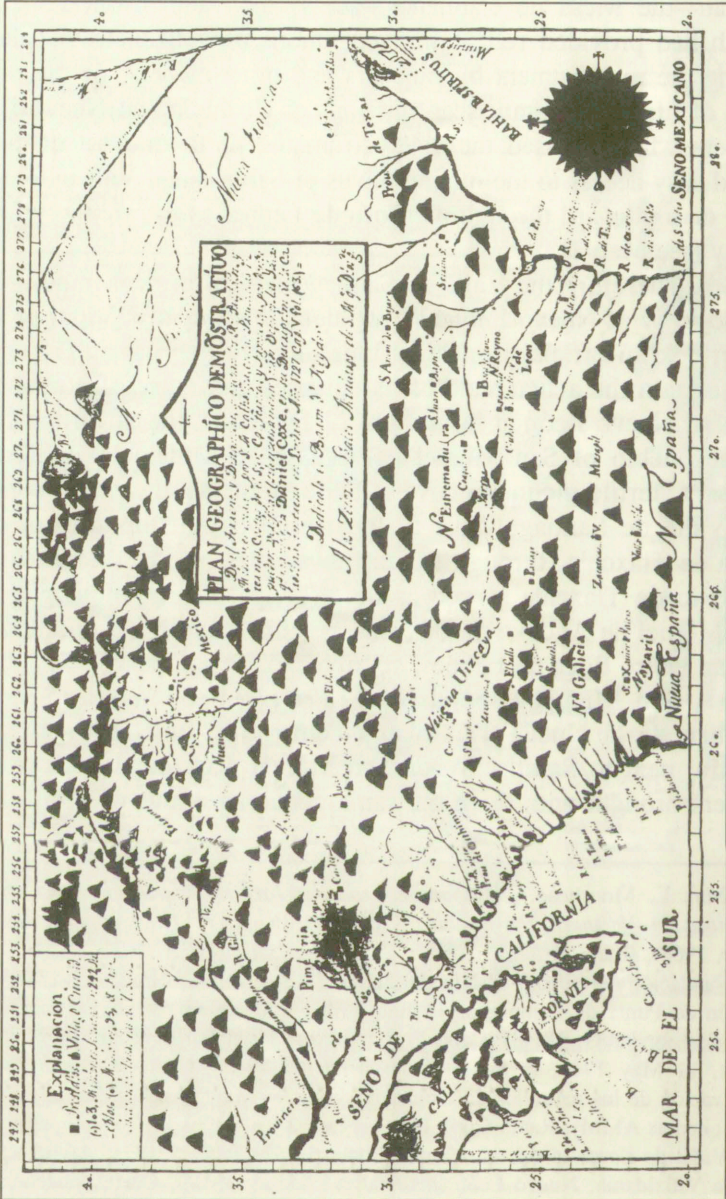
<sup>7</sup> Max L. Moorhead, *The Apache Frontier: Jacobo Ugarte and Spanish-Indian Relations in Northern New Spain, 1769-1791* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1968), Chap. 1.

<sup>8</sup> Fundación del pueblo de Nuestra Señora de los Dolores Horcasitas en la antigua Misión de Punta de Lampazos, 13 June 1745, AGN, Civil, vol. 194, exp. 1, fols. 102v-03v, and fols. 181-83v; and Testimony of Christobal Sánchez, Punta de Lampazos, 11 May 1745, in Superior despacho del Virrey Conde Fuenclara sobre la sublevación de los naturales de Lampazos, Archivo Municipal de Monterrey (hereinafter cited as AMM), Ramo Civil, leg. 74, exp. 2, fols. 33v-34.

<sup>9</sup> Vidal de Lorca to district chiefs, Monterrey, 28 January 1775, Archivo Municipal de Villaldama, Nuevo León (hereinafter cited as AMV), Correspondencia y Decretos, vol. 2, 1700-1799 [Reel 749], fol. 1.



Map 2



Provincias Internas, 1727. Mapas y Planos, México 524, Archivo General de Indias, Sevilla.



immunity which their ancestors had received in a royal charter at the time of San Esteban's founding in 1591.<sup>10</sup> The pioneers of San Esteban had been part of a contingent of about four hundred Tlaxcalan families recruited from their homeland in Central Mexico to assist in the pacification and settlement of the war-ravaged Chichimeca frontier. The communities established by these migrants, together with others founded during the course of the colonial era, were dispersed from Jalisco and San Luis Potosí to Coahuila and Nuevo León. Like their ancestors at San Esteban, the Tlaxcalans of San Miguel were primarily expected to be farmers and, whenever necessary, part-time soldiers. In both roles, they reinforced the dispersed clusters of Spaniards, mestizos, and others who constituted most of the non-Chichimeca population of Nuevo León.<sup>11</sup>

In addition, the founders of San Miguel helped to establish a Franciscan mission by inducing several bands of Alazapas to settle there. These hunter-gatherers, the principal indigenous inhabitants of the lower Valle de Santiago, settled into the community of Santa María de los Dolores, adjacent to San Miguel.<sup>12</sup> The proximity of the two settlements was a deliberate component of the mission enterprise. The

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<sup>10</sup> Grants such as the ones made to the colonists of 1591 included provision for minor noble status, as well as partial tax exemptions, for the Tlaxcalans. They also conferred lands, limited local self-government, and guarantees of viceregal protection for the Tlaxcalan communities from usurpation by Spaniards, both private individuals and royal officials. These grants were extraordinary in that most native peoples of central New Spain and other "core" areas of colonial Spanish America did not ordinarily enjoy such a broad spectrum of privileges and immunities, whereas Indians recruited for the northern and north central regions of New Spain did. The foundation of the northern Tlaxcalan communities, and its background, are summarized in Charles Gibson, *Tlaxcala in the Sixteenth Century* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1952), 181-89, and Andrea Martínez Baracs, "Colonizaciones tlaxcaltecas," *Historia Mexicana* 43 (1993):195-250.

<sup>11</sup> The best overall account of the Chichimeca wars of the 1500s is Philip Wayne Powell, *Soldiers, Indians, and Silver: The Northward Advance of New Spain, 1550-1600* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1952). The foundation and later history of the northern Tlaxcalan settlements are surveyed in Andrea Martínez Baracs, "Colonizaciones tlaxcaltecas," *Historia Mexicana* 43 (1993):195-250.

<sup>12</sup> Brebe Relacion...de la entrada del R P<sup>e</sup> fr franco esteves, con el R P<sup>e</sup> franco Hidalgo, en orden a la fundacion de la mision de Santa Maria de Dolores..., 20 January 1709, Archivo General de Indias (hereinafter cited as AGI), Audiencia de México, University of Texas Archives, Dunn Transcripts, vol. 77, exp. 1, pp. 4-6; and Narrative of Fray Diego Ximenez, 15 November [17]43, APL, Nuevo León, Bautismos, vol. 1, 1700-1727 [Reel 696], fol. 58.



pioneers of San Miguel, like those of San Esteban and numerous other Tlaxcalan colonies in the north, were intended to assist in the conversion and assimilation of the Alazapas by setting an appropriate example of Catholic faith and loyalty to the king's officials and by teaching the northerners to farm, tend livestock, and practice useful arts and crafts. The goal was to convert the Alazapas and the other indigenous nations of Nuevo León into satisfactory subjects, "gentle and Christian in doctrine and behavior."<sup>13</sup>

For a time, the new settlements appeared to flourish. San Miguel drew over thirty individuals and families from San Esteban to share the lands and water rights granted by Governor Agustín de Echeverz y Subiza, the first Marqués de San Miguel de Aguayo, for whom the Tlaxcalan community was named.<sup>14</sup> Its prospects brightened considerably when several of the Tlaxcalans participated in a major silver find nearby and thereafter became moderately successful mine operators. Their discovery led to the founding in 1690 of the *real de minas*, or mining community, of San Pedro Boca de Leones, which attracted a population that included, among others, several hundred mine owners, laborers, and merchants to the lower end of the Valle de Santiago.<sup>15</sup> Meanwhile, the newly established Alazapa mission disintegrated when the Franciscan authorities transferred its two missionaries to new pastures in east Texas. The bishop of Guadalajara, Juan de Santiago León Garabito, reluctantly assigned a secular clergyman to the reduction, but the priest soon abandoned his Alazapa charges, most of whom drifted off to the nearby sierras. The remaining Alazapas intermarried with the Tlaxcalans.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> The original wording is: "en doctrina y trato y cristiano." The words are those of Alonso de la Mota y Escobar, bishop of Guadalajara, 1597-1607. See his *Descripción geográfica de los reinos de Nueva Galicia, Nueva Vizcaya y Nuevo León* (Mexico City: Editorial Pedro Robredo, 1940), 160.

<sup>14</sup> Brebe Relacion, AGI, Audiencia de México, University of Texas, Dunn Transcripts, vol. 77, exp. 1, p. 8. See the census taken in 1690 by Diego Villareal, in *Títulos de fundación de San Miguel de Aguayo*, San Miguel, 12 October 1690, AMM, Ramo Civil, vol. 28A, exp. 18, fols. 21-22.

<sup>15</sup> Brebe Relacion, AGI, Audiencia de México, University of Texas, Dunn Transcripts, vol. 77, exp. 1, p. 8.

<sup>16</sup> Brebe Relacion, AGI, Audiencia de México, University of Texas, Dunn Transcripts, vol. 77, exp. 1, pp. 8-9; and Israel Cavazos Garza, "La obra franciscana en Nuevo León," *Humanitas* 2 (1961):449.



The collapse of Santa María de los Dolores paralleled that of other Franciscan missions in Nuevo León, many of which failed because of demands by *criollo* planters, stockmen, and mine owners for Indian workers. Under a variant of the *encomienda* system introduced into Nuevo León early in the seventeenth century, Spaniards theoretically received obligatory services from mission Indians allotted to them in grants, or *congregas*, in return for protection and material assistance to the missions. In reality, the *congrega* system became an unrestricted regime of neglect and forced labor, with severe punishments for those Indians who resisted or attempted to escape.<sup>17</sup> As malnutrition, overwork, physical abuse, and even murder reduced the available indigenous population, the *criollos* turned to slave raiding to fill their demanding requirements for workers.<sup>18</sup>

Many of these mission Indians managed to escape from bondage and joined their unconquered kinsmen and others in unrelenting warfare against the Spaniards, "burning their homes, laying waste their fields, destroying their livestock, and everywhere doing whatever their unbridled fury dictated."<sup>19</sup> While some of the refugees allied themselves with the tribes of Tamaulipas to the southeast,<sup>20</sup> others, including the Alazapas from Santa María, teamed up with Coahuiltecan rebels in the mountainous terrain west of the Valle de Santiago.<sup>21</sup> Shortly before the

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<sup>17</sup> Royal efforts to police the *congregas* were of no avail. See, for example, King Charles II to Viceroy Tomás Antonio de la Cerda y Aragón, Madrid, 14 March 1685, AGN, Reales Cédulas (originals), vol. 20, exp. 73, fols. 182-91.

<sup>18</sup> For a summary of estimated population loss resulting from the *congrega* system, see Plinio Ordóñez, "Las misiones franciscanas del Nuevo Reino de León, 1575-1715," *Historia Mexicana* 3 (1953):103-04. Fray Vicente Santa María's "Relación histórica de la colonia del Nuevo Santander y Costa del Seno Mexicano," in *Estado general de las fundaciones hechas por D. José de Escandón en la Colonia del Nuevo Santander, costa del Seno mexicano*, by José Tienda de Cuervo and Vicente Santa María (Mexico City: Talleres Gráficos de la Nación, 1930), 2:448-49, explains how the widespread enslavement of indigenous peoples in Nuevo León and other provinces grew out of the failure of the *congregas*.

<sup>19</sup> The original wording is: "incendiando sus casas, talando sus sementeras, aniquilando sus ganados y haciendo en todos aquellos campos cuanto les dictaba el brutal desenfreno de su furia," Santa María's "Relación histórica," in *Estado general* (1930), 2:450.

<sup>20</sup> Testamento de Don Lucas Caballero, Monterrey, 30 October 1690, AMM, Ramo Civil, vol. 19, exp. 2, fols. 12v-13; and Causa criminal contra el Yndio Ignacio y Marcelo [*sic*], borrados de nación..., 24 October 1705, AMV, Documentos Judiciales y Certificados, vol. 2, exp. 120 [Reel 659].

<sup>21</sup> Petition by Domingo Vicente to Governor Francisco de Mier y de la Torre, San



end of the seventeenth century, there was looming evidence that defectors from the *congregas* and missions of Nuevo León were in league with tribesmen from as far away as the plains of Texas, with whom they hunted buffalo and carried out raids upon Coahuila and Nuevo León.<sup>22</sup>

Eventually, some of the Alazapas returned to San Miguel and established a new community named San Antonio de Valenzuela, which was not affiliated with the Franciscans. In 1711, San Antonio received lands out of San Miguel's original grant<sup>23</sup> and also gained local autonomy under its own municipal council, or *cabildo*. This state of affairs ended abruptly in 1712, however, when some Tlaxcalans allegedly surprised the Alazapa municipal governor and a party of Tobosos with whom he was sharing a meal of barbecued mule. His companions were members of a nation whose bands ranged over the arid high plateaus of northern Nuevo León and Coahuila. The Tlaxcalans notified the *alcalde mayor*, who then deposed the governor and reduced San Antonio to a barrio, or ward, subordinate to San Miguel.<sup>24</sup> Long after this incident, the Alazapas came under suspicion of conspiring with the enemy whenever war parties were sighted in the vicinity.<sup>25</sup> Individual Alazapa rebels who disappeared from San Antonio for extended periods were routinely accused of living and collaborating with these nomadic Indians until well into the eighteenth century.<sup>26</sup> This suspicion affected the Alazapas' contribution to the defense of the area. When summoned, militiamen from San Antonio patrolled the passes nearby or assisted in the pursuit

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Pedro Boca de Leones, 29 July 1710, AMM, Ramo Civil, vol. 37, exp. 12, fol. 2.

<sup>22</sup> Juan Bautista Chapa to Juan de las Tres y Castillo, Boca de Leones, 2 April 1696, AMV, Documentos Judiciales y Certificados, vol. 1, exp. 93 [Reel 658].

<sup>23</sup> Domingo Vicente to Governor Francisco de Mier y de la Torre of Nuevo León, San Pedro de Leones, 29 July 1710, AMM, Ramo Civil, vol. 37, exp. 12, fol. 2; and Autos de fundación of San Antonio Valenzuela, San Miguel de Aguayo, 22-25 September 1711, AMV, Documentos Judiciales y Certificados, vol. 10, exp. 21 [Reel 670], fols. 2-12.

<sup>24</sup> See the Testimony of Tlaxcalan informants taken at San Pedro Boca de Leones, 16-19 July 1825, transcribed in AMV, Documentos Judiciales y Certificados, vol. 10, exp. 21 [Reel 670], fols. 114v-20v.

<sup>25</sup> Blas de la Garza Falcón to the governor of San Miguel, San Pedro, 7 March 1720, AMV, Correspondencia y Decretos, vol. 2 [Reel 749], fol. 1.

<sup>26</sup> Marcos Laureano Suárez to Governor Vicente González de Santianés, San Miguel, 15 September 1784, AMV, Documentos Judiciales y Certificados, vol. 8, exp. 4 [Reel 667], especially fol. 1.



of raiding parties.<sup>27</sup> For the next few decades, however, the Alzapas went to war on foot and were permitted to carry only bows and arrows, while their Tlaxcalan neighbors were mounted and carried a variety of firearms and edged weapons.<sup>28</sup>

As the unstable relationship between the Alzapas and Tlaxcalans of San Miguel demonstrates, the Valle de Santiago, Nuevo León, and the northeastern region as a whole, knew little peace in the eighteenth century. In 1715, a plenipotentiary deputy of the Viceroy Duque de Linares, Francisco Barbadillo y Victoria, abolished the hated *congregas*. In addition, he recruited several parties of Tlaxcalans from San Esteban and other towns to play their usual role in the pacification process.<sup>29</sup> Aside from the founding of a few durable communities by these newcomers, very little of Barbadillo's work endured; the new missions eventually lost most or all of their indigenous inhabitants, many of whom escaped to the mountains and allied themselves with the Tamaulipecos or Tobosos.<sup>30</sup> The Tobosos, who were hunter-gatherers prior to European settlement, probably became the enemies of the Spaniards, just as other Chichimecas did, largely as a reaction to slave-raiding. They also responded to the unprecedented opportunities for plunder offered by the isolated ranches, farms, and mining-camps of Coahuila and Nuevo León.<sup>31</sup> Throughout most of the eighteenth century, the residents of the Valle de Santiago regarded the Tobosos as their most dreaded adversaries. Later, an Athapaskan-speaking people, the Lipanes or Lipan Apaches, superseded them in that role.

As noted earlier, it was the responsibility of the Tlaxcalans and Alzapas of San Miguel to guard a series of passes which led into the valley from the Sierra Madre Oriental. At first, San Miguel appears to

<sup>27</sup> See, for example, Garza Falcón, 7 March 1720, AMV, Correspondencia y Decretos, vol. 2 [Reel 749], fol. 1. See also the description of a pursuit: Captain Juan de Noriega to Diego Bautista, Boca de Leones, 14 July 1719, Archivo Municipal de Bustamante, Nuevo León (hereinafter cited as AMB), Documentos Diversos, vol. 1, exp. 5 [Reel 921], 1719, fols. 1-2v.

<sup>28</sup> For the contrast between the two contingents of Indian militia, see the records of musters conducted at San Miguel on 1 April 1720, AMB, Documentos Diversos, vol. 1, exp. 8 [Reel 921], fols. 1v-3v; and Muster records, 25 July 1734, AMB, Documentos Diversos, vol. 1, exp. 8 [Reel 921], fols. 1v-4v.

<sup>29</sup> Barbadillo's activities in Nuevo León are summarized in Cavazos Garza, "Obra franciscana," 449; and Santa María, "Relación histórica," 459-60.

<sup>30</sup> See José Arlegui, *Crónica de la provincia de N.S.P.S. Francisco de Zacatecas* (1737; reprint, Mexico City: J. Bernardo de Hoyal, 1851), 112.

<sup>31</sup> Gerhard, *North Frontier*, 325.



have been assigned only the Boca de Tlaxcala and the Puerto de Gerónimo. However, by the late eighteenth century, San Miguel also covered the Santa Rita and Golondrinas passes, together with several settlements—El Sauz, Golondrinas, and Carrizal—situated on the valley floor. Of these settlements, Carrizal, the largest, was a ranching *hacienda* and a major contributor to the regional economy.<sup>32</sup> On other occasions, militiamen from San Miguel assisted their Spanish counterparts, as they did in 1719, for example, when raiders made off with muleherds belonging to three residents of San Pedro, including the parish priest. Ten Alazapas and several Tlaxcalans participated in the subsequent pursuit.<sup>33</sup>

Sometimes the men of San Miguel campaigned as far afield from their own neighborhood as the Sierra de Tamaulipas, along the eastern edge of Nuevo León,<sup>34</sup> but they served most consistently and effectively in the Valle de Santiago. Governor José Fernández de Jáuregui of Nuevo León appreciated the value of their service. In 1735 he wrote to Viceroy Juan Antonio de Vizarrón to protest a proposal by the governor of Coahuila, Blas de la Garza Falcón, to have the Tlaxcalans, together with the eight-man garrison of regular troops at San Pedro, transferred to a beleaguered outpost in the adjacent province. Fernández noted that the Tlaxcalan pueblo blocked the invasion routes most frequented by Tobosos. Admitting that the militiamen of San Miguel were too few to stop the invaders by themselves, he observed that they could and did hold them long enough to summon help from San Pedro. If the Tlaxcalans and soldiers were removed, the mining community would be unable to contain the Tobosos, who would find the road open all the way to Monterrey, not to mention settlements closer to hand.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> See the accompanying map for the confirmed or probable location of these sites. They are listed in various sources, eg., Petition by the cabildo of San Miguel, presented at San Pedro Boca de Leones, circa April 1719, AMB, Documentos Diversos, vol. 1, exp. 5 [Reel 921], fol. 1; and Governor Vidal de Lorca to district alcaldes, Monterrey, 21 November 1778, AMB, Documentos Diversos, vol. 2, exp. 30 [Reel 922], fol. 1v.

<sup>33</sup> Petition by the cabildo of San Miguel, presented at San Pedro Boca de Leones, circa April 1719, AMB, Documentos Diversos, vol. 1, exp. 5 [Reel 921], fols. 1-2.

<sup>34</sup> The cabildo of San Miguel to that of the city of Tlaxcala, 5 April 1755, AMB, Documentos Diversos, vol. 1, exp. 18 [Reel 921], fol. 1v.

<sup>35</sup> "Descripción del Nuevo Reino de León, escrita por su Gobernador para el doctor don Juan Antonio de Vizarrón y Equiarreta, Virrey de Nueva España México, 11



Governor Fernández may have exaggerated the Tlaxcalans' role somewhat, but his remonstrance had the desired effect: although the small garrison of San Pedro was soon broken up and its troopers were distributed among the Franciscan missions, San Miguel remained intact. It continued to contribute to the valley's defense, not only by providing patrols and lookouts, but also by maintaining a herd of mules and horses to be used by the provincial militia or by regulars.<sup>36</sup> In recognition of their service, the Tlaxcalans enjoyed exemption from certain taxes and also, on occasion, from having to furnish draft workers for the labor shortage at the mines of San Pedro Boca de Leones.<sup>37</sup>

These privileges, together with those derived from the Tlaxcalan colonization charter of 1591, were still in force when Governor Melchor Vidal de Lorca visited San Miguel in February 1775. There he found a community of 104 Tlaxcalan and twenty-four Alazapa families, and a militia enrollment of ninety-eight men, predominantly Tlaxcalans.<sup>38</sup> At his direction, the pueblo's governor assembled these part-time soldiers for a formal review, which showed that most of them owned muskets, together with a variety of edged weapons. Some of this equipment had been provided recently by the viceregal government, the cost to be reimbursed by the militiamen, but several of the latter were still listed as only partially equipped or without arms of any kind. San Miguel's militia was largely mobile, in keeping with its need to withstand or pursue its enemies. Only ten Tlaxcalans reported without

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de enero de 1735," in Joseph Fernández de Jáuregui Urrutia, *Descripción del Nuevo Reino de León, 1735-1740* (Monterrey: Instituto Tecnológico y de Estudios Superiores de Monterrey, 1963), 29. Fernández' text does not include the name of this governor, who served between 1733 and 1739.

<sup>36</sup> Petition by the municipal council of San Miguel, circa 1756, AMB, Documentos Diversos, vol. 2, exp. 103 [Reel 922], fol. 1; and Petition by council of San Bernardino de la Candela to that of San Miguel, Candela, circa 3 March 1747, AMB, Documentos Diversos, vol. 2, exp. 93, document 10 [Reel 922].

<sup>37</sup> Decree of Marcos Laureano Suárez, San Miguel, 18 Nov 1774, AMB, Documentos Diversos, vol. 1, exp. 36 [Reel 921], fol. 2v; and Petition by the council of San Miguel to Governor Fernández, San Pedro, 21 August 1737, AMV, Documentos Diversos, vol. 2, exp. 18 [Reel 690], fol. 1.

<sup>38</sup> *Relación de la Visita, que executó en la Provincia del Nuevo Reyno de León, su Governador...Don Melchor Vidal de Lorca y Villena, San Miguel, 22 February 1775*, AGN, Provincias Internas, vol. 117, exp. 3, fols. 197v-98. This material appears in published form in José Eleuterio González, *Colección de noticias y documentos para la historia del Estado de Nuevo-León, recogidos y ordenados de manera que formen una relación seguida* (Monterrey: Imprenta del Gobierno en Palacio, 1885), 250-51.



horses, while most brought one, two, or as many as four animals with full harness. Most significantly, the individuals identified as Alazapas, as well as others who probably belonged to that group, in some cases came as well-armed as the Tlaxcalans, and a few were mounted.<sup>39</sup> At a similar muster in 1734, the Alazapa contingent reported on foot, carrying bows and arrows. Perhaps the intervening decades had dulled some of the old distrust of the Alazapas among Tlaxcalans and *criollos*, but it is just as likely that the threat of incursions by Tobosos, and now by that of the Apaches, had demonstrated the foolishness of opposing a mounted enemy with lightly-armed foot soldiers.

Evidently pleased with San Miguel's display of military readiness, Vidal de Lorca completed his inspection tour and returned to Monterrey, apparently undistracted by recent Chichimeca hostilities. Three months later, however, the uneasy calm along the western border was broken by the first in a protracted series of raids—some of them uncomfortably close to the provincial capital, in which parties of as many as one hundred warriors participated. Vidal de Lorca and his subordinates took for granted that these were predominantly Lipan Apaches—superb riders and bowmen—rather than Tobosos or other groups indigenous to Nuevo León and Coahuila.<sup>40</sup>

In the midst of this resurgent violence, Viceroy Bucareli finally acceded to the governor's repeated pleas for the establishment of a mobile detachment at the Punta de Lampazos, but with certain stipulations:

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<sup>39</sup> The records of the muster, conducted by the Tlaxcalan governor of San Miguel, Marcos Laureano Suárez, on 23 February 1775, are found in AMB, Documentos Diversos, vol. 1, exp. 41 [Reel 921]. The distribution of weapons at San Miguel, in which some Alazapas received firearms, is traced in Governor Vidal de Lorca's decree to district *alcaldes*, Monterrey, 20 July 1774, AMV, Correspondencia y Decretos, vol. 2 [Reel 749], fol. 1; Order by Marcos Laureano Suárez and the *cabildo* to the pueblo, San Miguel de Aguayo, 26 August 1774, AMB, Documentos Diversos, vol. 1, exp. 33 [Reel 921], fol. 1v; Another order by Suárez, San Miguel de Aguayo, 18 November 1774, AMB, Documentos Diversos, vol. 1, exp. 36 [Reel 921]; and Roster of residents of San Miguel who contributed sums to defray the cost of arms provided by the viceregal authorities, San Miguel, 20 November 1774, AMB, Documentos Diversos, vol. 1, exp. 37 [Reel 921].

<sup>40</sup> See Vidal de Lorca to Bucareli, Monterrey, 26 May 1775, AGN, Provincias Internas, vol. 143, exp. 16, fol. 263; Vidal de Lorca to Bucareli, Monterrey, 23 August 1776, AGN, Provincias Internas, vol. 143, exp. 16, fols. 267-69; Bucareli to Vidal de Lorca, Mexico City, 11 September 1776, fol. 270; and Circular from Vidal de Lorca to district *alcaldes*, Monterrey, 11 September 1777, AMB, Documentos Diversos, vol. 2, exp. 11 [Reel 921].



the wealthy landowners and miners of western Nuevo León would have to underwrite the entire cost of the unit.<sup>41</sup> Also, instead of a garrison of full-time professionals, the force was to consist of relays of twenty-five men drawn from the frontier towns and outlying settlements themselves. Each contingent would serve for a month at a time.<sup>42</sup>

Nothing came of the viceroy's project until the spring and summer of 1778, when a new outbreak of fighting close to San Pedro and San Miguel prompted Bucareli and Vidal de Lorca to revive the plan. When the governor called upon the border communities to furnish men and money for the Lampazos detachment, several complained, including San Pedro. The miners there protested that Indian raids had already made it almost impossible to work their claims. Therefore, they could contribute nothing to the support of the new unit. In addition, if San Pedro sent men to Lampazos, the lower valley would be left largely defenseless since this town, with added help from San Miguel, provided the twenty-man force that guarded the Boca de Leones and other passes.<sup>43</sup>

Reporting on the whole affair to the viceroy in late September, Vidal de Lorca vented his frustration with the failure of the border settlements—and San Pedro in particular—to assist the Lampazos project. In addition, he questioned the value of the civilian militia itself, to which the miners attached so much significance. Referring apparently to a recent incident, Vidal de Lorca wondered why a war party of no more than seven members had been able to penetrate the province at will and to escape pursuit by militiamen who outnumbered them six to one. An experience such as this, he feared, would only make the raiders more intrepid. As for the security of the Valle de Santiago, the governor continued, it was due solely to the efforts of the Tlaxcalans and Alzapas of San Miguel: they—not the militia of San Pedro—stood

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<sup>41</sup> Vidal de Lorca to district alcaides, Monterrey, 2 December 1776, AMV, Correspondencia y Decretos, vol. 2 [Reel 749], fols. 1-2.

<sup>42</sup> Vidal de Lorca to district alcaides, Monterrey, 21 August 1778, AMV, Correspondencia y Decretos, vol. 2 [Reel 749], fol. 3v.

<sup>43</sup> Vidal de Lorca to district alcaides, Monterrey, 15 June 1778, AMV, Correspondencia y Decretos, vol. 2 [Reel 749], fol. 1; Vidal de Lorca to Bucareli, Monterrey, 20 June 1778, AGN, Provincias Internas, vol. 27, exp. 1, fol. 17; Vidal de Lorca to district alcaides, Monterrey, 14 July 1778, AMV, Correspondencia y Decretos, vol. 2 [Reel 749], fols. 1-2v; Vidal de Lorca to Bucareli, with enclosures, Monterrey, 25 September 1778, AGN, Provincias Internas, vol. 117, exp. 4, fols. 213-18v.



guard at the mouths of the passes. "Indeed," he declared, "without the protection afforded by these Indians, San Pedro would suffer dearly, for the miners perform badly as soldiers, whether on reconnaissance or in combat."<sup>44</sup> In an earlier report, the governor accused San Pedro of ignoring at least one appeal for armed assistance from its neighbors at San Miguel.<sup>45</sup> Vidal de Lorca may have overstated his case against the mining community, but his praise of the Tlaxcalan militiamen echoed what provincial officials and others had been saying for decades: San Miguel was vital to the defense of the Valle de Santiago.

In response to the governor late in 1778, Bucareli took a more equitable approach to the two communities. Recognizing their common services, he exempted both San Miguel, San Pedro, and several other towns from contributing men or money to the force at Lampazos. Instead, they would continue to carry out their assigned observation and patrolling tasks, while *hacendados* and other landowners in the border districts would assume most of the unit's expenses.<sup>46</sup> The following year, Vidal de Lorca instructed the district chiefs along the Coahuilan frontier to be prepared to dispatch half of their militiamen to any point threatened by the Apaches. In short, they would place themselves at the disposal of the district's *alcalde mayor*. If the threat was particularly serious, these civilian detachments would come under the direct control of Teodoro de Croix, *comandante general* of the recently organized Provincias Internas.<sup>47</sup>

The creation of the Commandancy General in 1776 was the centerpiece of a general examination of northern New Spain's defenses. While Nuevo León was not part of the *comandante general's* jurisdiction until 1786, the strengthening of the neighboring provinces of Coa-

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<sup>44</sup> The original wording is: "de modo que sin el resguardo de estos naturales padecería mucho aquel RI, pues aun las recorridas ò mariscadas las hacen sus vecinas muy mal," Vidal de Lorca to Bucareli, Monterrey, 25 September 1778, AGN, Provincias Internas, vol. 117, exp. 4, fols. 224v-26.

<sup>45</sup> Vidal de Lorca to Bucareli, Monterrey, 20 June 1778, AGN, Provincias Internas, vol. 27, exp. 1, fols. 19v-20r.

<sup>46</sup> Vidal de Lorca to various district alcaldes, Monterrey, 21 November 1778, AMB, Documentos Diversos, vol. 2, exp. 30 [Reel 922]. See also Distribucion de los Soldados que han de dar Equipados, y Bastimentados, las Ciudades, Villas, y lugares, á su Costa, 23 December 1779, AMB, Documentos Judiciales y Certificados, vol. 7, exp. 128 [Reel 667].

<sup>47</sup> Vidal de Lorca to various district alcaldes, Monterrey, 20 April 1779, AMB, Correspondencia y Decretos, vol. 2 [Reel 749].



huila and Texas should have afforded some protection from Apache attacks. So should the formation stationed at Lampazos, which became a reality in 1779.<sup>48</sup> In its final form, the unit was a mobile reconnaissance troop, or *compañía volante*, manned by long-term enlistees rather than relays of militiamen serving month-long tours of duty. By 1781, it had grown in size from the twenty-five cavalymen planned by Viceroy Bucareli to a force which his successor, Martín de Mayorga, set at over two hundred men, most of them recruited within Nuevo León.<sup>49</sup> In a report to Mayorga, Governor Vicente González de Santianés of Nuevo León expressed the hope that such an expanded force would soon bring Apache incursions to an end.<sup>50</sup>

If the governor expected so much from the *compañía volante*, his hopes were frustrated from the start. No single unit, no matter how well constituted, equipped, or led, could possibly cover all the passes and other points of entry into Nuevo León. In fact, the 1780s saw an intensification of raiding by the Apaches. Sometimes these raiders were accompanied, as in earlier times, by disaffected mission Indians and other indigenous groups.<sup>51</sup> They impacted all parts of the province, but nowhere with greater effect than in and near the Valle de Santiago. On 26 April 1782, for example, a war party killed four persons in the outskirts of San Miguel. The even more exposed neighborhood of Lampazos, and other valley settlements such as Carrizal and Golondrinas, recorded at least twenty victims of raids between 1781 and 1797.<sup>52</sup> In

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<sup>48</sup> Luis Navarro García, *Don José de Gálvez y la Comandancia General de las Provincias Internas del norte de Nueva España* (Seville: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1964), 469.

<sup>49</sup> Governor Vicente González de Santianés to district alcaldes, Monterrey, 14 October 1781, AMB, Correspondencia y Decretos, vol. 2 [Reel 749]. See also Max L. Moorhead, *The Presidio: Bastion of the Spanish Borderlands* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1975), 180.

<sup>50</sup> González de Santianés to Mayorga, Monterrey, 3 November 1781, AGN, Provincias Internas, vol. 118, fols. 53v-54.

<sup>51</sup> González de Santianés to district alcaldes, Monterrey, 17 July 1782 and 16 January 1783, AMB, Correspondencia y Decretos, vol. 2 [Reel 749]; and Governor Manuel Baamonde to Viceroy Conde de Revillagigedo II, Monterrey, 27 March 1790, AGN, Provincias Internas, vol. 159, exp. 3, fol. 112.

<sup>52</sup> Burial records for Bustamante, Nuevo León (i.e., San Miguel de Aguayo), Archivo Parroquial de Bustamante, Nuevo León (hereinafter cited as APB), Defunciones, libro 1, 1760-1791 [Reel 917] and 1791-1825 [Reel 918]; and Burial records for Lampazos, Nuevo León, 1813-1820, APL, Entierros, vol. 1, 1700-1803 [Reel 706].



the late 1780s, Juan de Ugalde, *comandante general* of the newly created Eastern Interior Provinces, weakened the *compañía volante* by reassigning half of it, most likely to reinforce the Texas garrisons. At the urging of Governor Manuel Bahamonde of Nuevo León, Viceroy Juan Vicente Güemes Pacheco returned these troops to the besieged frontier of the province in 1790.<sup>53</sup>

Consequently, in the last decade of the eighteenth century the Lampazos company constituted the vanguard of Nuevo León's military establishment, while civilian militia units occupied a secondary or supporting role. As Simón de Herrera, Governor of Nuevo León, made clear to Viceroy Manuel de la Grúa Talamanca in 1796, the principal tasks of the militia formations were to patrol the areas customarily assigned to them and to engage or pursue small groups of invaders. In the case of large war parties, according to Herrera, it took so long to assemble a militia force strong enough to deal with the raiders that they would retreat into the mountains before the civilians could overtake them.<sup>54</sup> A few years earlier, Governor Baamonde had criticized the militia even more severely. Their formations, he ridiculed, were imaginary, lacking arms, munitions, and mounts. Moreover, they were totally devoid of military discipline and order and were consumed by fear of their adversaries.<sup>55</sup>

Herrera was scarcely less critical. At one point in 1796, while deploring the failure of civilians in Nuevo León to equip themselves with firearms and other weapons, he contrasted the provincials of his day with their pioneer ancestors. The latter, he claimed, "though few in number, repulsed and punished their Indian foes, and threw the fear of God into them," while their descendants went about the countryside unarmed.<sup>56</sup> He ordered that all able-bodied males without weapons be

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<sup>53</sup> Revillagigedo to Baamonde, Mexico City, 28 April 1790, AGN, Provincias Internas, vol. 159, exp. 3, fol. 137.

<sup>54</sup> Herrera de la Grúa Talamanca to Viceroy Branciforte, Monterrey, 30 May and 13 June 1796, AGN, Provincias Internas, vol. 63, exp. 2, fols. 79v, 86, and 87v.

<sup>55</sup> Baamonde to Revillagigedo, Monterrey, 27 March 1790, AGN, Provincias Internas, vol. 159, exp. 3, fol. 113. Revillagigedo had a similarly low opinion of militia units, which may have influenced Baamonde's strongly negative remarks. See Christon I. Archer, *The Army in Bourbon Mexico, 1760-1810* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1977), 31.

<sup>56</sup> The original wording is: "los que siendo en corto numero, rechazaron, castigaron, y amedrentaron á los Yndios," Herrera to district alcaldes, Monterrey, 2 September 1796 [misfiled with material from 1736], AMV, Correspondencia y Decretos,



compelled, unless destitute, to purchase muskets from the arsenal at Monterrey. San Miguel de Aguayo was one of the communities that received firearms during the distribution ordered by Herrera,<sup>57</sup> but there is nothing in the documentary record to indicate whether he or Baamonde thought any better or worse of the Tlaxcalan and Alazapa militiamen than their *criollo* counterparts.

By the beginning of the nineteenth century, Nuevo León's enemies included the Comanches as well as Lipanes and other Apache groups.<sup>58</sup> Comanche raids within Nuevo León occurred in spite of the general peace settlements established by colonial officials in New Mexico and Texas during the 1780s and 1790s.<sup>59</sup> The "Lords of the South Plains," who were superb horsemen and equipped with firearms obtained from French-Canadian or Anglo-American merchants, were more formidable than even the greatly feared Apaches.<sup>60</sup>

The onset of the Mexican independence struggle left Nuevo León, together with the rest of northern Mexico, more at the mercy of its indigenous foes than ever. The rebellion of 1810-1811, identified with Miguel Hidalgo, barely touched the north until its final stages. Moreover, subsequent episodes of the independence conflict drained away most of the money and manpower that the viceregal authorities had previously devoted to frontier defense. This conflict also deprived provincial officials of the resources needed to provide peace goods—tobacco, items of clothing, and even arms and ammunition—promised to Comanches and other northern nations by treaty. Therefore, San Miguel and its neighbors in and near the Valle de Santiago were on their own again, striving to contain raiding parties which roamed the region

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vol. 2 [Reel 749].

<sup>57</sup> Municipal governor Christobal Ignacio de la Cruz to Simón de Herrera, San Miguel, 15 April 1797, AMB, Documentos Diversos, vol. 2, exp. 89 [Reel 922].

<sup>58</sup> Herrera to Branciforte, Monterrey, circa 5 April 1796, AGN, Provincias Internas, vol. 63, exp. 2, fol. 72.

<sup>59</sup> For the details of this peace settlement, which involved other northern nations as well, see Elizabeth A.H. John, *Storms Brewed in Other Men's Worlds: The Confrontation of Indians, Spanish, and French in the Southwest, 1540-1795* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1975), especially, Chapters 19-21.

<sup>60</sup> Navarro García, *Don José de Gálvez y la Comandancia General*, 108; and Oakah L. Jones, Jr., *Los Paisanos: Spanish Settlers on the Northern Frontier of New Spain* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1979), 91. The characterization is that of Ernest Wallace and Edward Adamson Hoebel, *The Comanches: Lords of the South Plains* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1952).



at will—killing, looting, and driving off livestock.<sup>61</sup> The later years of the independence decade were the worst. In the Lampazos district alone, fifty-one persons—all but six of them civilians—died at the hands of the northerners between 1817 and 1820. San Miguel's fragmentary data for the period show only one such fatality in 1818. However, there were probably other casualties for that year, as the toll of victims at Lampazos rose to eighteen.<sup>62</sup>

To cope with the accelerating assault upon lives and property by Comanche raiders almost exclusively, the Tlaxcalan community maintained, as in the past, a company of civilian militia. There was also a locally recruited unit of military engineers, the *zapadores*, stationed at San Miguel. However, the *zapadores* belonged to a group of elite reserve units, the *urbanos*, which were intended to assist the national army, not to participate in local defensive operations.<sup>63</sup> The military usefulness of the *zapadores* may be inferred from the fact that each recruit was listed on the earliest unit roster as having joined involuntarily, by way of punishment for "lack of respect and subordination to superiors."<sup>64</sup>

Clearly, civilian militiamen were once again to be San Miguel's principal defenders, as Mexico made the difficult transition from colonial status to independence in 1821. The pueblo's militia, which now aggregated over one hundred officers and men,<sup>65</sup> continued to carry out its traditional patrolling and surveillance function, and to lend assistance to other units as well, including the *compañía volante* at Lam-

<sup>61</sup> Comandante General Joaquín de Arredondo to district alcaldes, Monterrey, 4 May 1818, AMB, Documentos Diversos, vol. 3 [Reel 923], fol. 70.

<sup>62</sup> Burial records for Lampazos, Nuevo León, 1813-1820, APL, Entierros, vols. 1 and 2 [Reel 706]; and Burial records for Bustamante, Nuevo León (i.e., San Miguel de Aguayo), APB, Nuevo León, Defunciones, libro no. 2, entry for 4 May 1818 [Reel 918].

<sup>63</sup> Arredondo to the magistrate of San Pedro Boca de Leones, Monterrey, 9 March 1815, AMB, Documentos Diversos, vol. 3 [Reel 923], fols. 55-56; and David J. Weber, *The Mexican Frontier, 1821-1846: The American Southwest under Mexico* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1982), 116.

<sup>64</sup> The original wording is: "falta de subordinación hacia sus superiores," Cuerpo de Milicias Provinciales de [*sic*] Nuevo Reyno de León, 29 March 1815, AMB, Documentos Diversos, vol. 3 [Reel 923].

<sup>65</sup> Compañía de Milicia Nacional situada en el Pueblo de San Miguel de Aguayo, San Miguel, 2 November 1823, AMB, Documentos Diversos, vol. 4, exp. 92 [Reel 924].



pazos.<sup>66</sup> The burden of these duties fell heavily upon the community, due in part because Apaches and Comanches chronically disrupted agriculture and livestock production all across northern and western Nuevo León. San Miguel and other settlements found themselves isolated and scarcely able to produce enough food for subsistence, let alone a surplus for sale at provincial or national markets via unsafe roads. Under these circumstances, in 1824 the town council declared to Governor José Antonio Rodríguez that San Miguel could no longer sustain a militia force unless its Spanish neighbors, including the miners of Boca de Leones, were to provide the equipment and mounts. The Tlaxcalan dignitaries further alleged that their community had never been able to perform military duties without assistance from other settlements in the vicinity.<sup>67</sup>

The documentary records, including laudatory statements by provincial governors, amply demonstrate that the latter allegation was untrue. San Miguel had long played a substantial role, using its own manpower and resources alone, in the defense of northern and western Nuevo León. Now, in the face of damaging raids by their northern foes, the Tlaxcalan community and its neighbors were not only poorer but also more vulnerable after independence. Both the post-independence First Mexican Empire and the First Federal Republic which succeeded it neglected the national military formations in the border jurisdictions. Once again, these settlements assumed the major burden of their own defense.<sup>68</sup> Worse yet, persistent civil strife between Centralist and Federalist factions drew the remaining national units, such as presidial garrisons, away from the northern Mexican frontier, while their commanders chose one side or another in a continual succession of conflicts. Finally, the crushing defeat of Santa Anna's forces at the hands of the Texan rebels in 1836 laid the whole Mexican north-

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<sup>66</sup> The Commandant General of the Eastern Interior Provinces (i.e., Joaquín Arredondo) to provincial district chiefs, Monterrey, 2 July 1821, AMB, Documentos Diversos, vol. 24, Quaderno primero de oficios, fols. 17v-18; and Report of the alcalde constitucional of Boca de Leones (unnamed) to the alcaldes of San Miguel (unnamed) and Lampazos (Andrés de Villareal), Boca de Leones, 1 March 1822, AMB, Documentos Diversos, vol. 4, Quaderno segundo de oficios, fols. 11 and 16.

<sup>67</sup> Oficio al Exmo. Sor. Govr. Del Estado, San Miguel, 4 November 1824, AMB, Documentos Diversos, vol. 5, no. 57 [Reel 924], fol. 16v.

<sup>68</sup> Vito Alessio Robles, *Coahuila y Texas desde la consumación de la independencia hasta el tratado de paz de Guadalupe Hidalgo* (Mexico City: Editorial Porrúa, 1945-1946) 2:234.



east open to raids of unprecedented scale by the Comanches and their allies.<sup>69</sup> Some of the most devastating incursions took place in the autumn and winter of 1840-1841, when parties of as many as four hundred warriors overran most of Coahuila, Nuevo León, and Tamaulipas.<sup>70</sup> During one of these raids, San Miguel lost four of its residents to the northerners.<sup>71</sup>

In the end, it took decades of virtually continuous warfare before San Miguel, the Valle de Santiago, and all of northern Mexico saw the last of the "Lords of the South Plains," as well as the Apaches and other indigenous adversaries. Anglo-American military pressure gradually ground the northern nations down to defeated, demoralized fragments, something that generations of Hispanic American strategic planners, soldiers, and frontier settlers had been unable to accomplish. The Anglo-Americans, it should be noted, had the resources of a growing, rapidly industrializing nation behind them. The defenders of the northern Mexican territories had to rely upon regimes which, even at their best, were too overextended—geographically and financially—to support them effectively against ever more dangerous adversaries. Civilian militiamen, such as those of San Miguel de Aguayo, with inadequate arms and little tactical experience beyond light patrolling, pursuits, and occasional skirmishes, were ill-prepared to confront Apache or Comanche raiding parties. Under such circumstances, it is remarkable that Mexico's embattled frontier communities survived the chaotic post-independence era at all.

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<sup>69</sup> Isidro Vizcaya Canales, ed., *La invasión de los indios bárbaros al noreste de México en los años de 1840 y 1841* (Monterrey: Instituto Tecnológico y de Estudios Superiores, 1968), 50.

<sup>70</sup> Vizcaya Canales, *La invasión*, 51-52; and Charles H. Harris III, *A Mexican Family Empire: The Latifundio of the Sánchez Navarros, 1765-1867* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1975), 192-94.

<sup>71</sup> Death notices for October-December 1840, APB, Defunciones, libro 1°, 1825-1848 [Reel 918].